

Projecting Immigration

Issues and Perspectives

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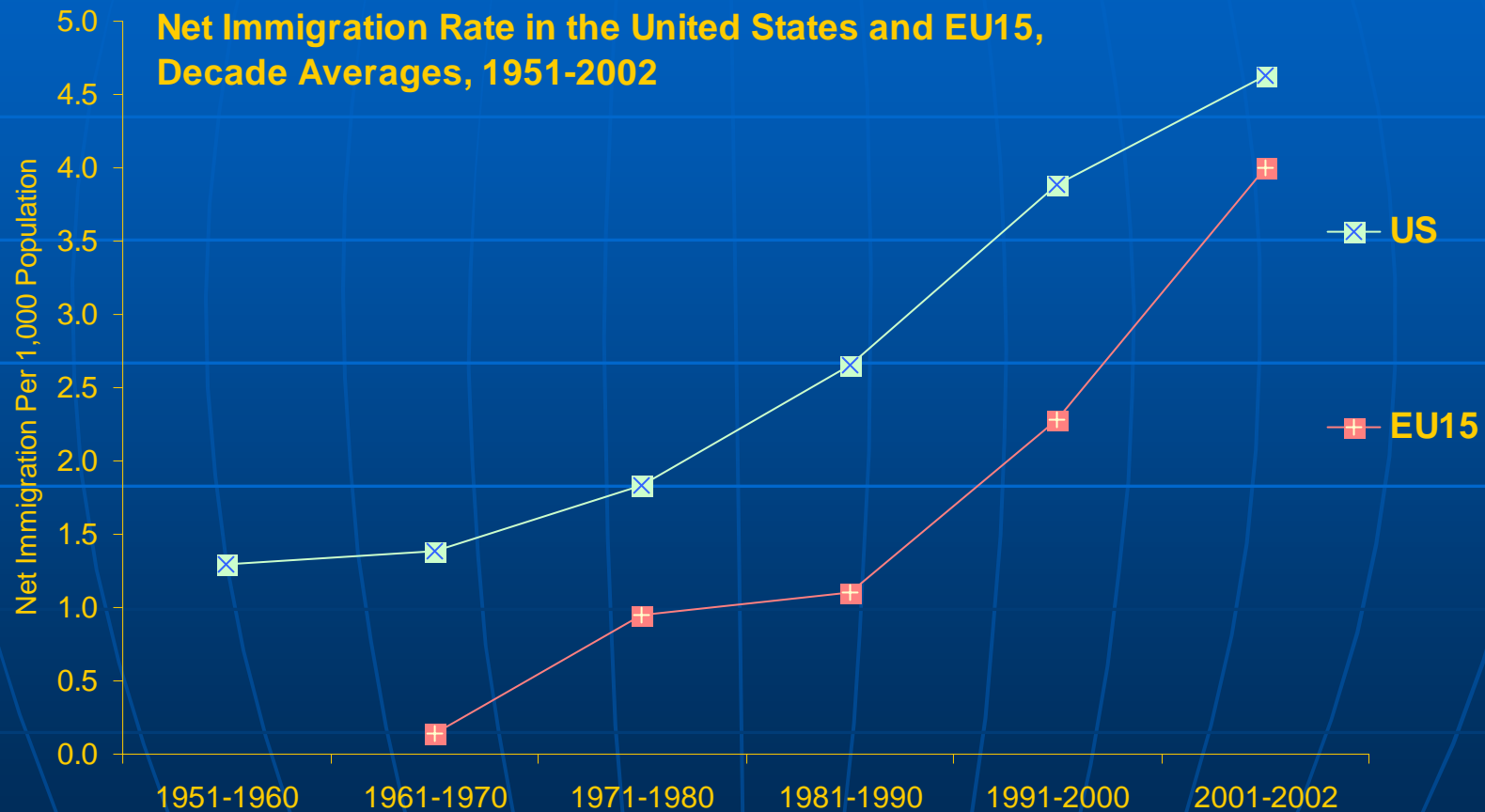
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Issue 1

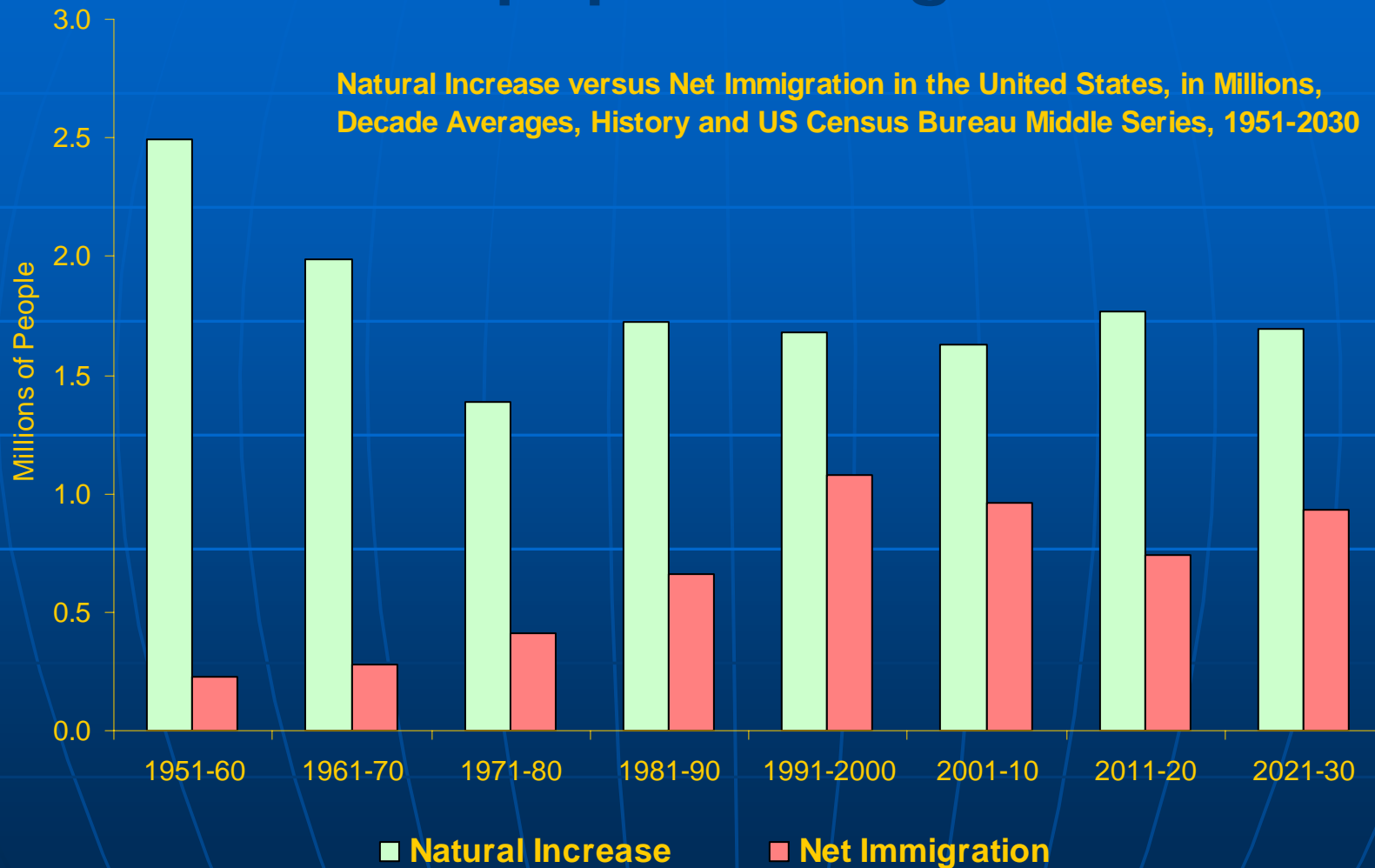
- ☐ Immigration now plays a decisive role in determining the long-term demographic trajectory of the developed countries.

Immigration rates have risen steadily in Europe and the United States.



Source: Eurostat (2005), Wilmoth (2003), and author's calculations

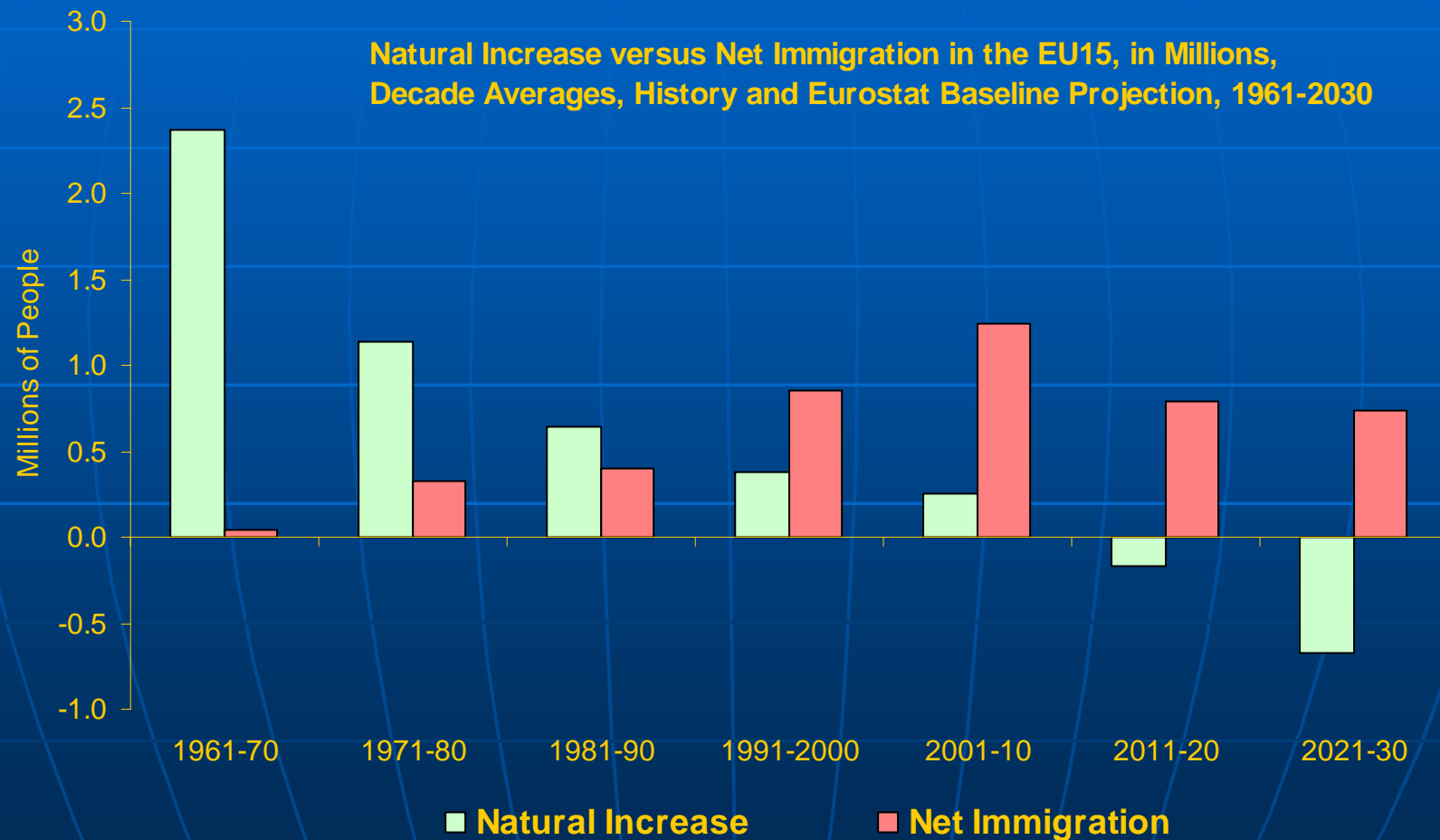
Immigration is now a major source of U.S. population growth.



Source: US Census Bureau (various years), Wilmoth (2003), and author's calculations



In Europe, immigration will soon be the only source of population growth.



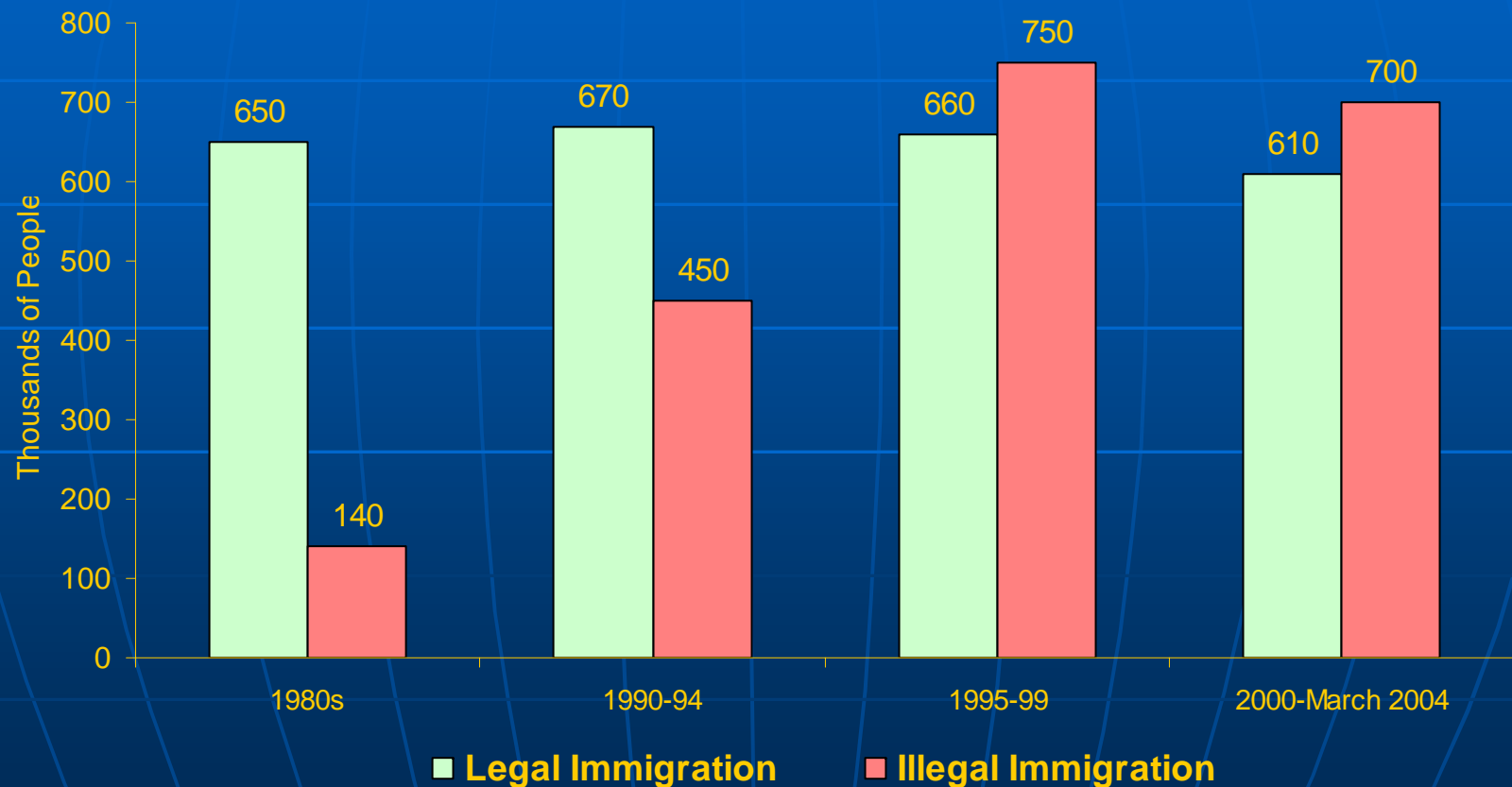
Source: Eurostat (2005) and author's calculations

Issue 2

- ❑ Immigration now plays a decisive role in determining the long-term demographic trajectory of the developed countries.
- ❑ Most projections continue to rely on ad hoc assumptions based on little theory and virtually no definable methodology.

The rise of illegal immigration makes policy a less reliable projection guide.

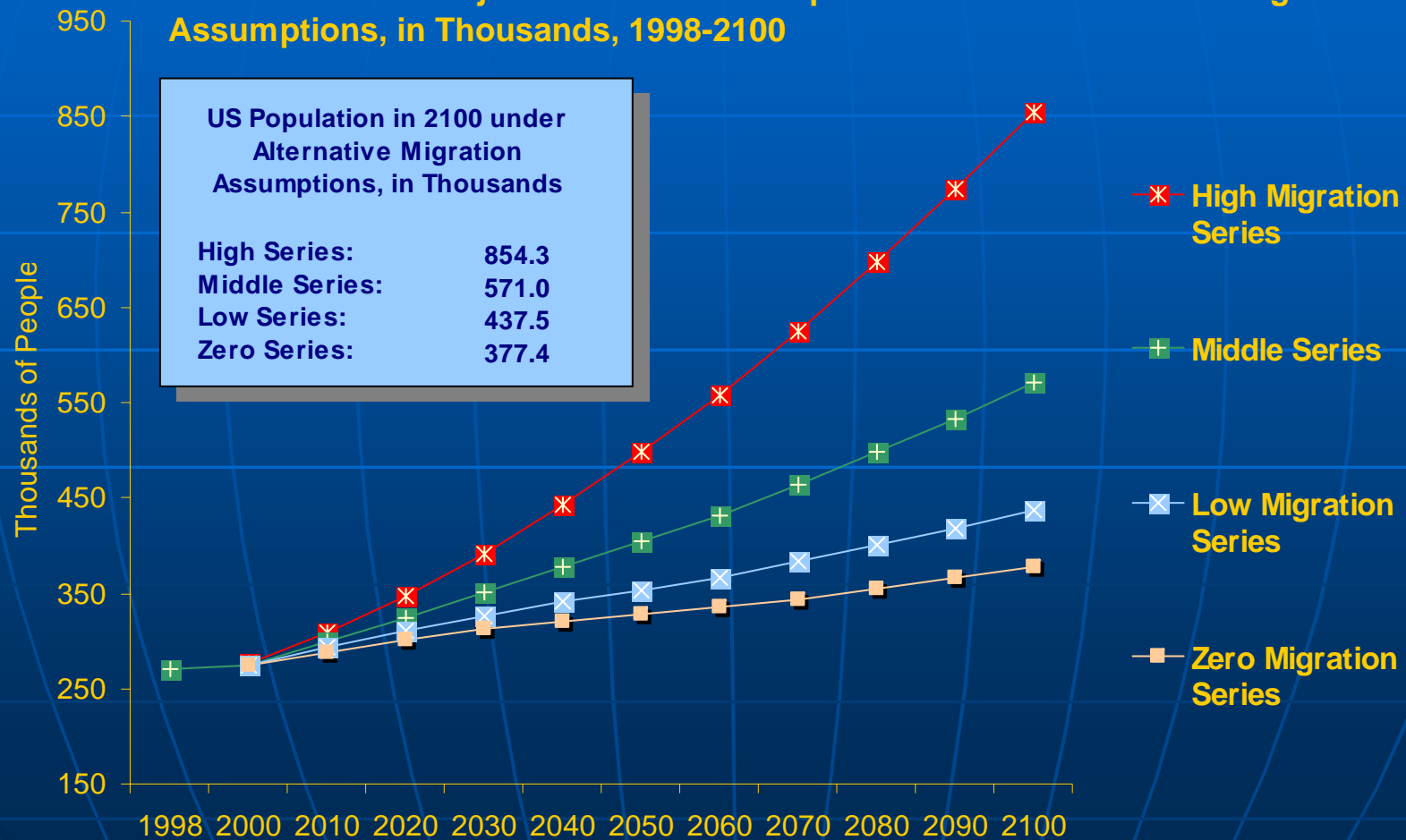
Legal versus Illegal Immigration in Thousands, Period Averages, 1980-2004



Source: Passel (2005)

Current projections encompass a huge range of possible outcomes.

Census Bureau Projections of the US Population under Alternative Migration Assumptions, in Thousands, 1998-2100



Source: US Census Bureau (2000)



Issue 3

- ❑ Immigration now plays a decisive role in determining the long-term demographic trajectory of the developed countries.
- ❑ Most projections continue to rely on ad hoc assumptions based on little theory and virtually no definable methodology.
- ❑ Projection practice could be improved by harnessing the insights of immigration theory.



Four Theoretical Frameworks.

- ❑ **NEOCLASSICAL FRAMEWORK** – immigration is driven by wage differentials in the global labor market
- ❑ **WORLD SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK** – immigration is driven by the social forces of “globalization”
- ❑ **NEW ECONOMICS FRAMEWORK** – immigration decisions are made within the context of complex intrafamily relationships
- ❑ **SOCIAL NETWORK FRAMEWORK** – immigration is “path-dependent”; community networks create “immigration momentum”



Issue 4

- ☐ Immigration now plays a decisive role in determining the long-term demographic trajectory of the developed countries.
- ☐ Most projections continue to rely on ad hoc assumptions based on little theory and virtually no definable methodology.
- ☐ Projection practice could be improved by harnessing the insights of immigration theory.
- ☐ Any effort to improve projection practice must confront a number of key choices.



Key Projection Choices.

- ☐ Should projections be constrained by current policy?
- ☐ Should projections be “trend based” or “driver based”?
- ☐ Should projections use a “variant” or “probabalistic” approach to measuring uncertainty?

